

Response from Mayor Fullmer to *New York Times* Story

The story published today in *The New York Times* and *Salt Lake Tribune* is rife with falsehoods and inaccuracies. The article relies almost exclusively on the accounts of two men with well-documented histories of abusive, manipulative, and dishonest behavior toward me and others—my ex-husband, Dave Sylvester, who was mentally unstable and subjected me to severe physical and emotional abuse during a five-year-long marriage that ended nearly 20 years ago, and Jacob Holdaway, a man notorious for bullying and spreading falsehoods about me, the city of Vineyard, and anyone he views as political or professional rivals. Despite my detailed responses to the reporter's questions, the Times chose to exclude critical information that did not align with the preconceived narrative they sought to promote. Both men have clear motives to distort the truth, and their credibility has been repeatedly called into question by those who know them best. These incredibly relevant details went entirely unchecked by the *New York Times*.

Personal Allegations: An Irrelevant and Harmful Distraction

My ex-husband subjected me to years of severe emotional, physical, and financial abuse during a marriage that ended nearly two decades ago.

Two women who knew him independently confirmed his abusive behavior to the *New York Times*. Despite this corroboration, the Times chose to amplify his unverified claims while disregarding his well-documented history of coercion and manipulation.

The domestic violence I endured at the hands of Dave Sylvester was terrifying and traumatic. I was thrown into walls, psychologically abused, and manipulated. I feared for my safety and am afraid even now that sharing these limited details in order to defend myself against his lies and false claims could put me in danger.

As any survivor of domestic violence will tell you, when you are in a traumatic and abusive situation, you will do anything you can to make the abuse stop. The specific examples my ex-husband lied to the reporter about for that story, and in which she took his word over mine, are a reflection of the abuse I was enduring at that time and my attempts to reason with a mentally unstable abuser in hopes of making the abuse stop, which it didn't.

It honestly feels like my abusive ex-husband is being given a weapon by the *New York Times* to hurt me all over again. The *New York Times* was made aware of the abuse I suffered at his hands ahead of publication. Also ahead of publication, the reporter who wrote this story approached another ex-wife of Dave Sylvester's for comment. Here is the email statement she sent the reporter, which was completely ignored in the story (note: her experiences very closely mirror mine):

Letter to reporter from Cassi Nunes, ex-wife of Dave Sylvester:
[Content of Cassi's email remains unchanged]

Hey Leia,

I reached out to my ex husband asking if he still had the messages that David Sylvester sent him, and I am still waiting to hear back from him. I also asked a few people who knew me back then if they have my old phone number saved in their phones (I just don't remember what it was that long ago). I was hoping I could call the phone provider and get records if I could figure that out. I also have not had time to go through my facebook messages, but I will tonight. I know he messaged me several times on Facebook, but I deleted my account and only restarted this year, so I'm not sure if they will be saved. I use a different email address for my new Facebook, so I'm guessing they probably won't be linked. I don't know if it would be possible for you to have pull for old records like that?

I googled Julie after talking to you and found out she is the mayor of Vineyard! I lived there up until a year ago and had no idea. I am going to CC her because I would like her to know that I support her, I know from experience that can be very good for a victim.

I deleted all my social media several times, changed my phone number twice, and changed emails 3 times to stop him from contacting me.

I was thinking more, and a few more things came to my mind. I would really like to hold him accountable because I have regretted never reporting to the police what he did to me. I wanted to thoroughly put down everything I could think of today in case you are in a time crunch with your story.

I am so sad for Julie that David is still harassing her, and trying to get back in her life. He is very obsessive. He used to reach out to me at least every few months, but especially when he was in a new relationship, and I would tell him to leave me alone and block him on whatever platform he used. Then, he would create a different account to get through my block. He even contacted my ex-husband (I think it was in 2016?) to talk to him about me. When that didn't work, he purchased artwork off of my ex-husband's website. My ex-husband was convinced that David was trying to find my address. I have not heard from him since.

I was absolutely terrified for well over a decade that he would show up at my door and drag me back. When I had my first child, I used to have nightmares that David would show up and kill her and my husband because he was angry at me for moving on. I know it sounds SO dramatic. But it is the honest truth.

We were only together 7 ½ months. He took my phone from me because he did not want me talking to my mom (who was telling me he was abusive), and I ended up stealing it back to call my mom, who came and got me. I left without telling him, while he was at school, because I was so scared of him.

He coercively raped me many times. He would tell me that it was my responsibility to have sex with him and if I didn't, I was failing in my responsibility as a woman. He told me that if I didn't, he would have to cheat to fulfill that need. He constantly talked to me about how many Mormon women (I grew up Mormon) have problems with sexual desire because of growing up in the religion and that it was normal for me to feel disgusted and not want to have sex. He said I just needed to push through it and that my desire to not have sex with him was just because there was something wrong with me mentally.

David told me that I was naive and innocent, and that the neighborhood we lived in was so dangerous that I could not go outside on my own or I would be killed or raped. He trapped me in that apartment by making me so scared of leaving. He would leave for days at a time and claim he was studying and sleeping in the library at his school. Sometimes I wouldn't even have enough food for when he was gone and I would eat only on candy from the multiple candy jars he kept in the apartment. We only had 1 car, so I couldn't have gone anywhere without walking miles and I was so terrified of doing so because of the tales he spun about the neighborhood.

There was a woman in the neighborhood who befriended me and started seeing issues in our relationship, and he forbade me from seeing her because he said she was "too liberal" and would taint my mind and opinions. The relief society president (a female leader in the Mormon church) began to befriend me and David stopped letting me go to

events where she would be, never explaining to me why. Later, I found out (through a conversation with her and my mother) it was because she had experience with abuse and was suspicious of David.

David even refused to let me go to church. He claimed it was because he needed to study for dental school and did not have time to go, and if I went without him it would reflect poorly on him – which was a sin because it was my duty as his woman to raise him up in other's esteem.

He would scream at me all the time for whatever small slight I did. He would scream at me while I just sobbed. I became so depressed, I wrote a suicide letter to every member of my family, intending on killing myself. However, my mother saw the signs and sent David's mother (Myra) to stay with me to stop me.

If I did not have dinner prepared on time, he would scream at me.

If I did not have the house cleaned, he would scream at me.

If I did not have sex with him, he would scream at me.

If I disturbed him while studying (even accidentally, or by causing a sound by something like TRIPPING), he would scream at me.

He forced me to have multiple jobs to support him. I found a nannying job I liked, but he did not like the woman and the schedule that caused him not to have control of the car, so he made me quit and find another. I paid all of the bills. I was so tired and scared all the time.

He stole my phone and turned off our internet so that I would not have contact with my friends and family (he had moved me from Missouri from Utah, and everyone I knew was in Utah).

When I finally got the courage to leave, I had to steal my own phone back from him and call my mom. My parents came as fast as they could and helped me pack up and leave. I did not tell him I was leaving because I was too afraid of how he would react.

It is hard to explain to someone who has not experienced this type of abuse why I was so terrified – because he had never actually hit me. But there were many veiled threats and displays of his power. He would also talk about how true power came from money and an ability to craft words. He said that he could destroy anybody's life with words and the money he would eventually have by becoming an orthodontist or an oral surgeon. I left after only being with him for 7 ½ months. There is no doubt in my mind that if I would have stayed longer, that my physical safety would have been at risk. Since leaving him, I have done volunteer work for domestic violence and he displayed all the patterns of a very dangerous man.

After I left, David harassed me for something like a decade.

Immediately after leaving, he would send me sexual texts about how he knew I missed the sex because he was so "good," and other similar things. This happened several times a week for at least a year. At one point in that first year, he called me, and said that he wouldn't leave me alone because we needed to make things work, and leaving was shameful. That made me have a panic attack and cry. I was supposed to meet my family up Provo Canyon at Aspen Grove and I actually had this panic attack while driving and crashed my car. I remember screaming and hitting the steering wheel, begging for God to just take me because I couldn't take this abuse any more.

After that first year, he slowed to only contacting me every few months or so until 2018. At first, I would reply and tell him outlandish (untrue) stories about what I was doing to "throw him off the trail" of where I was. Then, I started just telling him to leave me alone and blocking him. He would create different accounts to get around my "block." That's why I changed my contact information so many times. He even contacted my ex-husband at least once and I believe my mom several times. My ex-husband told me it was "super weird," and that it seemed like David was trying to be friends with him. It really scared me that if I chose to not allow him to bully me, he would just get through to me through someone else.

After I left, that first year, he also tried to blackmail me for money. But, I had enrolled in school in Missouri while with him and never attended classes (because I couldn't with how much he required me to work), so I failed everything. David told me that if I didn't give him money to help with rent that he would call all the schools in Utah and give them my Missouri records so that all the F's would make it so that I would not be accepted into any school. I had a tax return check that was mailed to his resident and he forwarded to me during this time, and he told me that if I didn't deposit the money into his account, he would also report me to the schools.

I always told him I would give him the money or said nothing, but I never actually did. I didn't really have anything else he could threaten me with because I was so young with no assets and nothing going for me. I did, however, not go back to school until 2015 because I believe he would do what he threatened. I don't know if he did. I am grateful that he had nothing else to threaten me with.

My experience with David Sylvester put me into an abuse cycle, and I dated a few men very similar to him. I always thought it was my fault. I always thought I was just "messed up" and "broken" and "hard to love." Finally, I went to therapy to try and figure out why this kept happening to me. It all started with David and my expectations of what was "right" in relationships because of him. David ruined my life. At 33 years old, I am finally in a relationship that is respectful and "healthy." I have wasted so much of my life repeating patterns that David taught me and trying to heal.

Around 2018 (I think) I finally responded to one of his messages and told him something like "I never think or care about you. You're obsessed with me. Move on." He never messaged me again after that (although he did buy the artwork I mentioned above after that).

That is all I can think of at this time. I'm sorry it is so long! I would really love to see him held accountable. I hope you are able to contact subsequent women that he has been with, because this type of person does not stop.. They usually get worse.

Thank you for being light to this story. I would really appreciate it if you didn't use my name, although it is okay to use what I wrote.

Cassi

To resurrect this deeply painful chapter of my life—one that I have worked hard to heal from—is both cruel and irrelevant to my role as a public servant. It is particularly troubling that these allegations, based on incidents that occurred before I took office, are being presented as though they bear relevance to my performance as mayor.

The emails cited in the story, including statements made under duress, reflect the fear and survival tactics of someone trapped in an abusive relationship. Any characterization of these emails as evidence of my character today is not only misleading but retraumatizing.

I know I am a public figure, but something that took place almost 20 years ago, before I was ever elected to office, in which I was the victim of domestic violence, should not have ethically been included in that story.

On Councilman Jacob Holdaway: Falsehoods and Obstruction

Councilman Jacob Holdaway has consistently engaged in bullying, spreading inaccurate information, and obstructing progress in Vineyard. His baseless claims are part of a broader pattern of divisive behavior, as noted by multiple colleagues and staff members. His actions have included:

- Harming his former employer, Qualtrics, and, after being legally required to pay for the harm and damage he committed against them, using his position as a City Councilman to settle old scores and continuously criticize Qualtrics in his official capacity at public meetings.
- Misrepresenting events to suit his personal vendettas.
- Undermining critical city projects, causing unnecessary delays and expenses.
- Attempting to weaponize personal attacks to discredit me and others.

It is disappointing that the Times gave such weight to his allegations without scrutinizing his history of dishonesty and disruption.

Accountability in Journalism: A Call for Fairness

The decision by *The New York Times* to foreground the voices of two unreliable individuals while ignoring substantial evidence to the contrary reflects a troubling lack of journalistic balance. This approach not only undermines the truth but also perpetuates harm against survivors of abuse by legitimizing the voices of their abusers.

Public servants should be judged on their record, integrity, and commitment to their communities—not on irrelevant, unsubstantiated personal narratives. Despite the challenges posed by this story, I remain committed to transparency, accountability, and serving the people of Vineyard.

A Record of Service and Progress

During my 10+ years of public service as mayor, I have worked tirelessly to transform Vineyard from a fast growing small town of 300 people into the thriving community of 22,000+ residents we have today. Together, we have:

- Developed master plans for housing, transportation, and recreation.
- Attracted major developments like the Huntsman Cancer Institute and Water's Edge.
- Addressed infrastructure challenges through strategic investments.

These achievements are the result of collaboration and dedication, and they are a testament to what we can accomplish when we work together.

Moving Forward

I urge the media and our community to focus on the substantive issues that affect Vineyard's future rather than distractions rooted in personal vendettas. My commitment to this city remains steadfast, and I will continue to prioritize progress, integrity, and the well-being of our residents.

Thank you to everyone who has stood by me through this time. Your support reminds me why I chose to serve and reinforces my determination to finish my term with the same dedication I have shown since day one.